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Views Told By Kennedy On Defense

We Should 'Err On Side of Safety

By Martin G. Berck

Sen. John F. Kennedy, D-Mass., charged here yesterday that the Atomic Energy Commission and the Pentagon have a "tremendous vested interest" in continuing the testing of nuclear weapons.

At the same time, the Senator, answering college students' questions on a television broadcast and at a luncheon, said the nation should "err on the side of safety" in its defense program.

Though calling for greater national effort, he refused to be drawn into indicting the Administration for allegedly misleading the American public on its defense posture. Such an indictment has been issued by Sen. Stuart Symington, of Missouri, an undeclared aspirant for the Democratic Presidential nomination.

Sen. Kennedy, who is a declared candidate for the nomination, was asked his opinion of President Eisenhower's statements that the United States is not lagging behind the Soviet Union in defense. He replied:

"Well, I say that I think the Administration, the President, reached his judgment in good faith, and obviously he's not going to play with the security of the United States."

The Senator went on to say that "it's extremely difficult to make a correct assessment with precision as to what a dictatorship is doing."

The British and French, he said, miscalculated Hitler's situation in the 1930's, and "we miscalculated the speed with which the Russians would develop the atomic and the hydrogen weapons and the missiles themselves."

"Err on Side of Caution"

Moreover, the Central Intelligence Agency can collect only a limited amount of information, he said, adding:

"Therefore I think you should err on the side of safety. Men who have the same information as the President—Power, Ridgway, Gavin and Taylor—come to the exact same conclusion. If we're moving in a posi-

the side of caution.

Sen. Kennedy's reference was to four top-ranking military figures who have been critical of the Administration's defense policies. They are Gen. Thomas S. Power, chief of the Strategic Air Command; Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway and Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, both retired Army Chiefs of Staff, and Lieut. Gen. James M. Gavin, former chief of the Army's research and development.

Sees Need for More Effort

He expressed agreement with them, to the extent that he said:

"I think we must make a greater effort than the Administration seems willing to make."

Holding that "you can't negotiate unless you negotiate from a position of equal strength," Mr. Kennedy said the over-all issue is "whether the power and strength of the

United States is increasing as fast as that of the Soviet Union." Encompassed in this problem, he said, are issues of defense, foreign policy, domestic questions, education and economic growth.

Sen. Kennedy said that the nation has been in a "somewhat hypocritical position" in regard to nuclear testing, and implied that the Administration failed to give its full backing to Harold E. Stassen when Mr. Stassen represented the United States at disarmament talks in London three years ago.

Before the talks collapsed, Sen. Kennedy said, Mr. Stassen "was not too far from agreement in London."

The Senator, asserting that he would go farther than the Administration in seeking to limit bomb tests, continued:

"I think, even at Geneva in the last twelve months, that really we could have done better than we have done."

Would Press Disarming

He asserted: "I think there is a tremendous vested interest in both the Atomic Energy Commission and the Pentagon in continuing the tests, while there is comparatively little scientific research and work being done on what can be done in the field of disarmament."

Sen. Kennedy said he was in general agreement with the Administration's policy being pursued in Western Europe, but said the Administration missed its chance two or three years ago "to move somewhat in the area of disengagement" of Western and Soviet forces. Agreement along those lines does not seem likely today, he said.

Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-0

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The Senator addressed a panel of student editors on the American Broadcasting Company's television program "College News Conference." Later he spoke at a luncheon meeting of 150 delegates to the Second Annual College News Conference at the Overseas Press Club, 35 E. 39th St.